

SWINNERTON  
Family History



*Francis Arthur Swinnerton*  
1925-2001

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JOURNAL OF THE SWINNERTON SOCIETY

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VOLUME 11. No.12

April 2002

# The Swinnerton Society

A non-profit making organisation devoted to the welfare of Swinnerton Church and the research and publication of Swinnerton Family Records

*Registered as Charity No.518184 in the United Kingdom*

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## SWINNERTON FAMILY HISTORY

Volume 11. No.12

APRIL 2002

### CONTENTS

Foreword - The Chairman	234
Francis Arthur Swinnerton	235
The World Parrott Trust in Action	242
Tales from the Map Room – Roy Talbot	244
Further letters to Mark Swinnerton	246
Letters	251
Family Notes	252

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## *Foreword – The Chairman*

I am looking forward to seeing you at our Triennial Gathering at Swynnerton on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> June. It is a rather strange society that only meets like this once every three years, but that is the penalty for being a one-name society whose members are spread around the country and also overseas. Of course, we have an AGM every year, but only a few are able to attend. How different to another society I belong to, the Finchley Art Society, whose members meet every week, and committee meetings are held locally in the borough.

But the Swynnerton Society is very fortunate in having such a lovely village as Swynnerton to have its Gatherings in, and where we receive such a very warm welcome from the Rector of St.Mary's, the Revd. Barry Brewer, and his officers. Coming to Swynnerton is like coming home, and if you haven't made the effort yet, please come and join in the Gathering this year. It's a long time to the next one in 2005!

The interest in Family History is still growing, apparently. In January, the Public Record Office tried to put the 1901 census on line; within three hours more than a million people, myself included, tried unsuccessfully to search the database. If you are on the web, try yourself; the website is:-

[www.census.pro.gov.uk](http://www.census.pro.gov.uk).

According to one newspaper report, genealogy is thought to be the third most popular online activity, after pornography and music. The PRO census has put all 32 million census entries collected on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1901 online. Next year the 1891 returns for England and Wales will go online, with earlier censuses following.

We have been talking to St.Mary's church about how we can make a contribution for some improvement for the church, and the Revd. Barry Brewer has asked us if we would help to acquire an Aumbry for the Chancel. What is an Aumbry, you may well ask? An Aumbry is a secure place, or cupboard, for consecrated sacraments that the Lay Ministers of the church will be taking out to minister to the community at large. The Aumbry for St.Mary's will be made in oak by a skilled craftsman with a carved decorated centrepiece to suit a Grade 1 listed building.

*Roger Swynnerton*

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## **Frank Swynnerton**

I am very sorry to have to tell you of the death of Frank on the 29<sup>th</sup> November last year. Frank joined the society in 1983 and had been a loyal supporter ever since. He was one of that class of individual we are so short of these days – a character! It seems to me that everyone is much too conformist and conscious of their image today. Frank was his own man and I well remember him at our great Domesday Gathering in 1986 when he was only too happy to share his great knowledge and love of Staffordshire with us and conducted several unofficial tours.

I had the great pleasure of spending an evening with him in his own home in the Isle of Man a few years ago when I was presiding at a conference there: he was in excellent form and the conversation (and the wine) flowed effortlessly!

Our sincere sympathy goes to his wife Helen and their daughters Mareta and Annabel who are both members of the Society and who we are looking forward to seeing at the Gathering this year.

The eulogy at Frank's funeral was given by his son-in-law Charles Jerrett and I reproduce it here – it encapsulates the life of Frank so very well indeed that I thought you would all like to share it.

## **FRANCIS ARTHUR SWINNERTON 1925 –2001**

This is the day that Frank worked so hard to postpone. Everyday he would climb onto his exercise bike and pedal away, his headphones on, listening to glorious music, declaring "I'm in the business of postponing my funeral".

And a pretty good job he did of it too. He was the last and by far the longest lived of the line of Swinnertons (mostly called Frank) who, in the last century, left the Staffordshire village of Adbaston and walked to the Potteries to establish their catering business.

He was an adored first son born in 1925 in Havelock Place, Shelton, Stoke on Trent with his grandparents living in the big house just along the street. He was so much older than his brother John, that he was brought up as virtually an only child. He was spoilt in the most literal sense of the word. His adoring

mother thought only cream was good enough for Frank. Of course with all the fat in the cream and all the goodness in the bit which Frank never had, it gave him a weight problem that was to last all his days – and worse it gave him rickets and his legs were never really strong enough to cope with the load he was later to place upon them.

It is fair to say that Frank was most definitely not “a good little boy”. He was every mother’s nightmare at childrens’ parties. It was Frank who crept into the dining room and gathered all the crackers round his own plate. It was Frank who started the jelly fights.

Prep school must have come as huge shock to Frank. Yarlett Hall, like most prep schools of its time, was straight out of Dickens. Latin imposed at the end of a cane, French indoctrinated by removal of hair. Frank had nothing but contempt and terror of his headmaster. But from Yarlett came a friendship, with Martin Graham and most of all with David Wild - the Terrible Trio - that was to last all their lives.

At Wrekin College Frank met Maxie Gordon, the headmaster and probably the first adult that he truly respected. Wrekin transformed Frank into a tough, determined and responsible young man. “Bid the Headmaster Good Morning!” instructed Maxie Gordon “even if he knows you don’t mean it!” – a lesson that stood Frank in good stead throughout his political career.

There was no time to consider what to do after school. There was a war on. As any one who knows Frank will understand, if you’re going to war you must do it with the proper outfit. Denied the Navy because he was colour blind, Frank secured a commission as a subaltern in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion the Welsh Guards. Now even in war time the Guards are a spot fussy about who they commission. Frank was not by any standards Welsh, he had no military background to his family and, with the best will in the world, Wrekin hardly gave him the right old-school tie for entrée into the Brigade. No, Frank was commissioned into the Guards because he was, even at eighteen, already the remarkable man we have all come to know.

His military service was short and very sharp. The Welsh Guards fought their way up through Italy. Indeed the whole wonderful story of Frank’s life might have ended right there, in a village in the Po valley. Under heavy fire the Welsh Guards sought cover in the local church. Frank heard the whiz of the bullet and felt the splinters of masonry as it exploded against the Church wall an inch to the left of his face. But Frank survived and the Guards fought on through Yugoslavia and Austria. Fifty years later, Frank took Helen back to that village. To their amazement there, in the church wall, was the self-same bullet hole – a monument to the luck of Frank and the speed of Italian post-war restoration work.

Frank was one of those remarkable young men, and there were many of them, who went into that war at a very tender age, saw and had to do terrible things and yet, when it was over, put down their arms, rarely referred to what they been through, and buckled down to the job of building a better world.

Frank’s better world lay in the family business and in wooing his fair Helen. They were married in 1948 and were 53 years together, up mountains, on the high seas, through childbirth, politics, business, building and retirement – and as Helen said at the last “Never one dull moment”. She went down the aisle more fully aware than most of Frankie’s foibles. She had after all known him since they were kindergarten kids together at The Skep in Basford. Her brothers had been at Yarlett and Wrekin with Frank. It was Frank who used to claim he had been misled. He claims he left the reception from the magnificent house at Stapley, chauffeured in the family Rolls – and returned from his honeymoon to find it all gone, no house no chauffeur, no Rolls. But Frank had no doubt that, in Helen, he had captured the prize asset of the Rowley fortune.

What they achieved together in the next few years was staggering. The family business was well established but stagnant. Frank’s father, Pop Swinnerton, was a great character but years of “colourful” living affected his health and the business. Frank took it over and started to build it up. It was a big business. They fed most of the miners in the North Staffordshire Coalfield, had the finest function catering business in the country, a bakery, restaurants in Stoke and Newcastle and off-licences. By the time Frank handed it on to his brother John, it was twice the size and on a strong upward curve. He was a powerful influence in the Chamber of Commerce and the Rotary Club and a serious force in the business life of North Staffordshire.

Frank’s better world required better bacon which demanded better pigs. Never one to do things by half when a gross would do, he established, in the glorious (but it has to be said somewhat bleak) setting of Wetley Abbey Farm, the Wetley Herd of Large White Pigs. Not three or four piglets in the back yard but a magnificent piggery of 400 or more internationally famous porkers. He went on to become Chairman of the local National Farmers Union.

His pursuit of excellence in the production of foodstuffs took him to the USA, Denmark, Holland, Germany, France and to the Chair of the Catering & Food Technology Committee of what was then North Staffs Technical College (now Staffordshire University) and Membership of the Hotel and Catering Institute. This was a man who took his food very seriously!

Always a larger than life character, an excellent raconteur and fine public speaker, it was no surprise when Frank tried his hand at politics and even less when he was very successful. He wooed and won the voters of Ward 12 and

sat for many years on the Stoke on Trent City Council. His work on the Education Health and Sewage Committees attracted attention at Central Office. Looking for a sound local candidate to soften up the Leek Constituency for the Tories in the 1966 General Election, they chose Frank. It was never an easy task. Demographics were against him and the Labour Candidate, Harold Davies, was a well established sitting member as well as Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Prime Minister. Frank was narrowly defeated in the Labour landslide of 31<sup>st</sup> March 1966.

But Frank's vote had been huge and with forthcoming boundary changes, the seat had to be a Tory gain next time. Frank was young (only 40) and charismatic with experience in business, agriculture and local politics. He was a natural for promotion within Ted Heath's Conservative Party when it got back to power. Everyone predicted a glittering parliamentary career. Everyone, except Frank. To the utter amazement of Central Office, the Press, the local business community and even of his family he stood down as candidate and told the world that he was going to "spend more time with his family". That's a cliché now but Frank, as ever, did it first. And being Frank he did it bigger and better. He wasn't just retiring, he was emigrating – and what's more he wasn't just flying off to a golf-course in the Bahamas, he was sailing with his family as crew, 2000 miles through the rivers and canals of France to Malta. It caused huge headlines.

The fact is that with taxation at 97% and no real prospect of much improvement under the Tories, he was always running to stand still. In the years between leaving school and his fortieth birthday he fought a war, liberated 3 countries, travelled the world, built up a first rate business, built a livestock herd from scratch, rose through local politics and stood for parliament – Oh yes and he and Helen had produced and brought up two beautiful daughters!

I should just say at this point that all work and no play wasn't Frankie at all. New Year's Eve at Wetley has passed into legend – and fortunately the photographs/ and the movie survive to assist those whose memories might be a little clouded by the alcohol.

He was the Coxswain of the Stoke-on Trent Lifeboat .... which conjures up a glorious vision of stormy nights on the Cauldon Canal – but sadly it just meant running the flag days and fund raisers.

He was fascinated by scuba-diving (an enthusiasm he passed on to both his grandsons). But no snorkeling visit to Newcastle Baths for Frank – Oh no - Frank enrolled at the Portsmouth Diving School and proudly emerged with his aqua-lung and certificate – ManFish 112. Everyone does it now but only 100 or so got there ahead of Frank.

He took up skiing but wasn't satisfied with a gentle slide at Chataeux D'Oeux before the Tea Dance. He had to do it "properly". The Austrians were the technical leaders and St Anton the crack resort. They stayed at the house of Rudi Matt, Head of the Ski School and the 1<sup>st</sup> World Slalom Champion. It worked - Frank went on ski-ing into his seventies, Helen still does and as with everywhere Frank went, the Matts are still friends. He was founder member of the first North Staffs Ski Club setting up a tractor driven ski-lift on Rough Close in snowy winters of the early sixties.

Frank didn't wait for things to happen (in fact Frank never waited for anything!). He made them happen.

The voyage to Malta was epic. 10 days or so into the journey, on Frank's 42<sup>nd</sup> birthday, they were making regal progress down the Seine when black smoke started to billow out from the floor boards. Frank's command of the languages of Europe leapt to the rescue – "Nous avons du feu" he cried to a passing barge. (as he later said "we didn't actually 'ave du feu but "Nous avons du exhaust manifold frappe" lacked that certain ring"). The engine was shut down and boat hitched up to the barge to the great amusement of the bargees who hadn't seen an ocean going yacht on the Seine. In fact the journey to the Med hadn't been done that often before and usually with rather smaller boats. In many places there would be only a foot between the river bottom and the keel. Wrong!! Soon after the tow began there was no room at all below the keel, it ground into the mud, the rope strained ever tighter and then - well I don't think any of us would call Frank "agile" but no Olympic gymnast ever moved so fast. He got to the bow and cut the line in time to stop us tipping bow first into the Seine. We spent the rest of day rowing and winching and heaving "Harpsong" off the mud. Worse was to follow. Having left England fed up with union discord, Frank and Helen wound up in the greatest, longest and most complete industrial shutdown ever known in Europe. 1968 and the whole of France rose in revolution. Barricades on the streets of Paris, no lock keepers, no trains, no planes no nothing. It could only happen to Frank!

Those years in Malta were a treasure trove of memory and friendships for Frank and Helen. But Malta's charms faded as Col. Gadaffi's Libyan influence on the island grew. In 1972 Frank and Helen visited his old school chum David Wild and his wife Mary in the Isle of Man. They were greatly attracted, moved here in 1973 and lived here ever since. Strikes and extremism may have caused him to leave England, followed him to France and forced him out of Malta, but they never bothered him here. This was home. North Staffordshire exerts the strongest pull on the hearts of its native sons but once they were settled here on the island they never wanted to be anywhere else – particularly when his favourite aunt, Brenda Lawson, and Helen's sister Louise

and her husband Bill all came to live in the Glen Road at Laxey (quite a little Barlaston Old Road by the Sea).

For at heart Frank was first and foremost a family man. He had been forced by his parents' illness and early deaths to be largely responsible for upbringing of his brother John (10 years his junior) and it affected Frank more than any of us might know, when John died 5 years ago.

He adored his daughters Retty and Annabel. He always said that they never gave him a moment's trouble. But they were far too pretty and far too high spirited for that to be true. He just loved them too much to notice. Being a suitor for their hand was not easy. In Jeremy and me you see the most rigorously vetted sons-in-law in history. Being found good enough for Frank's daughters is the greatest boost to our self-esteem that either of us ever had.

Frank never understood his capacity to appear big and frightening to children and the young but he was always the first person they would turn to in a crisis. I know that I am not alone in being forever grateful that when the storms hit my life, Frank was there to turn to.

He ran the most wonderful Camps for Over Privileged Children in Snowdonia, for the girls and their cousins.

He adored his grandchildren and sometimes used to just gaze at them with tears in his eyes. His enthusiasm was enormous and his generosity staggering. "The right tool for the job" was his motto. Joanna showed great interest and talent in music. Frank brought her an oboe. Arthur adored "things with wings". Frank saw to it that he had flying lessons. And his pleasure at Jo's Oxford Music Scholarship and Arty's 1<sup>st</sup> in Aerospace Engineering was almost as great as theirs.

He wasn't afraid to admit he was wrong. He was quite forthright in telling 12 year old Suzi that she might become a very good skier but could never make a ski racer. But two years later, he was the first to equip her and get her to Canada to take part in her first World Schools Ski Championships and he made jolly sure that he was in Italy (in his old war time stamping ground) for her second.

George had to have the full computer set-up without which, Frank felt, no child can be educated to day. More, he went out and selected it himself, no mean feat for a 75 year old. Frank, more than most, really could appreciate the breadth of his grandson's talent as a good scholar, a very good footballer, a brilliant rugby player (following in Frank's own footsteps- he was 1<sup>st</sup> XV hooker for his school for two years), a collector and diver.

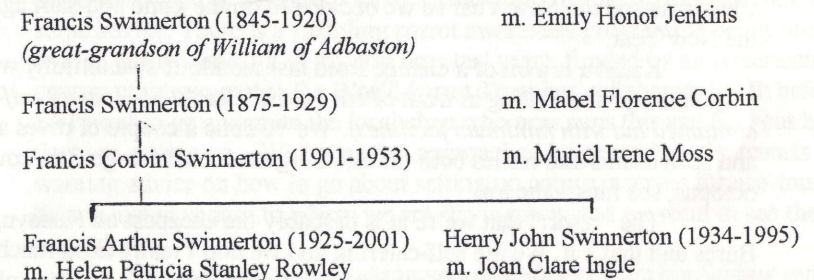
For, as you might have realized by now, Frank loved breadth and diversity. In every house he ever lived in you found wonderful things, interesting ceramics and furniture, prints, paintings, models ships, books by the thousand (he was awesomely well read), and music - case upon case of CDs and tapes with, of course, the right equipment to play it on (actually you didn't need to

with, of course, the right equipment to play it on (actually you didn't need to be in Frank's house to hear the music - he played it so loudly you could hear it in Ramsey!). For a man who, unlike his brother John, had no discernible musical talent, his love of, and interest in, music was prodigious. He wallowed in opera, loved New Orleans Jazz, sophisticated New York night-club singers, orchestral, brass-band and eastern orthodox religious music.

But most of all there was Helen. Was she the face that launched his thousand ships? For ships there always were - from their bruising days racing together in the Snipe Class at the National Dingy Championships, through Harpsong, Ninga and Saturna to Mini-Mary and Useful. (No wonder all their grandchildren love the sea). Heaven knows how difficult it must have been to live with Frank. But throughout their 53 years together, she was by his side in every one of his triumphs, his enthusiasms, and sudden "good ideas"; every head-banging frustration and every magical, exhilarating new experience; truly never a dull moment; the fount and the bed-rock of his being. She deserves a medal but will tell you that she enjoyed, with Frank, a love and a life unusually special and rewarding.

There were so many facets to this huge and brilliant diamond, this magnificent contradiction that we have known and loved and now have lost. But though our lives will all be emptier for Frank's passing, they are all immensely fuller for our having known him.

### The Caterers



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## **PsittaScene - The World Parrot Trust in Action.**

Volume 13, No.4 November 2001

Red Throated Lorikeet – *Chamosyna amalibis*.

As a bird that has been seen only a few times in the last hundred years, and with no live birds in captivity, we thought for a time that the Red-throated Lorikeet might well never have been photographed. Then recently, Dr Kirsty Swinnerton ran into a striking photograph of this bird on the internet of all places, shot by a researcher by the name of Dr William Beckon. Not only was he kind enough to share this image for readers of the *PsittaScene*, but the shot is actually of a wild bird, so we are pleased to highlight it on our Parrots in the Wild series. Dr Swinnerton, incidentally, just left for the field, launching the first field study of these Fijian jewels; a project funded exclusively by the World Parrot Trust.

and – an extract from a letter from Kirsty in the field!

National Trust of Fiji, Government Buildings, 3 Ma'afu Street, PO Box 2089, Suva, FIJI.

..... I'm writing this lying in my hammock tied between two coconut palms, with a warm breeze coming off the sea at a small resort in Kadavu (the 4<sup>th</sup> largest island - I came here briefly last year). We have been here since Christmas Eve and are staying until 3<sup>rd</sup> Jan. Most people are on holiday over Christmas and the New Year so we decided to do the same and start again in the New Year.

Kadavu is a bit of a change from last month. It's beautifully warm, with fantastic snorkelling in front of our beach 'Bure' (*ed: A small self-contained hut with minimum facilities*). We've done a couple of dives as well and seen sharks and turtles both times! Gorgeous corals, huge fish, cowries, octopus, sea fans – the lot.

The "resort" that we're at is probably the cheapest on Kadavu, just 10 Bures and that's it. We are self-catering and we don't really need much else. It's family run and all the kids are here for the holidays. We are the only ones here now and before that only an Australian couple so it's pretty quiet. ....

We spent the last month in the Central Highlands of Viti Levu. We were very lucky because just at the site we wanted to survey, is a hydro-electric power station manned by about 20 people. They gave us the full use of

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their manager's flat which was complete with electric oven, microwave, washing machine, tumbler drier, hot shower, 4 bedrooms and more soft chairs and sofas than you could reasonably use. None of us felt this was like fieldwork at all! But it was great to have that as a base.

Alex and I drove up from Suva – five hours and 100kms on a very rough dirt road. The National Trust have been great in letting us use their 4WD jeep and their driver took our local counterpart Alifereti (Fijian for Alfred so we call him "Fred") and all our gear up in the jeep and collected it all one month later. The dirt bikes we have are great, in very good condition for 2<sup>nd</sup> hand.

While we were up in the mountains, we did go off for 2 weeks camping in a couple of other areas to survey further afield. Our first week was great weather but then the rains set in and we lost a few days to torrential rain, low cloud and thick mist – so low we couldn't even see the sides of the trails we were surveying from. We have seen pretty much everything else – fruit bats, snakes, most of the native birds including some very colourful fruit pigeons, owls, goshawk, the two other parrot species here and I even saw the local Peregrine Falcon of which there are supposed to be only 50 pairs left. But we didn't find our Red-Throated Lorikeet.

This was a bit disappointing as this is meant to be the main area where they have been most recently seen (the last time in 1993). I am hoping we can go back there in April and have another go at another time of year.

We've more sites in Viti Levu to look at, but they are lowland and I'm not very hopeful. Then I hope to go to Tavenui by early February. I am quite hopeful for Tavenui because there is a large amount of forest there and the island has a reputation for its birdlife. We have a couple of days work here on Kadavu before we head back to Suva. One of the villages here wants to set aside some land as a nature reserve, particularly for the parrots and they want some advice. There is a fledgling parrot awareness programme being run here (which partly came out of my trip here last year), funded by an American conservation group that the World Parrot Trust has collaborated with before. So I want to go and meet the local chap who now runs this and find out how they are getting on. We have been approached by several tourist resorts wanting advice on how to go about setting up nature reserves for eco-tourism. One is just next door to where we are staying now and we went to see them yesterday.

So far it's all very working very well (apart from not finding our bird!) We have got lots of support for our project and everyone couldn't be more helpful. The e-mail system here works rather erratically as the local server crashes regularly! I am picking them up easily enough although I'm only in Suva about once a month. ....

### Tales from the Map Room

It was after his marriage to Grace Dover in 1915 that the Reverend Charles Edward Swinnerton M.A. (Haileybury & St. John's, Oxford) [CS38] acquired sufficient missionary zeal to set out into the world with a view, no doubt, to doing good. The Empire upon which the sun never set afforded much scope for so doing. His travels took him to Borneo via Singapore. Having got thus far he noted that HMG were desperately appealing for every able-bodied man to join the colours – your country needs *you*. His capacity for doing good had brought him to the attention of Major-General Sir Dudley Howard Ridout, General Officer Commanding, South-East Asia. So impressed had Ridout become that the Reverend Charles sailed from Borneo armed with a eulogy to present to the guards regiment he proposed to join upon landing: “eminently suited for a commission ... a leader among men ... respected and admired by everyone ... sure to do well ... education, determination and grit”. Charles, being penniless, had acquired the £38 needed for passage for self, wife, and son (Charles Guy Dover Swinnerton [CS40]) by borrowing same from the Hong Kong Government on the basis that this was repayable by the War Office as confirmed by Ridout. He duly landed in England and was accepted into the Guards. That should have been that.

Eagle eyes in the War Office however had spotted something. Borneo was not mainland south-east Asia. This was not Ridout's jurisdiction. The Hong Kong Government sought its money. The War Office shrugged. The Hong Kong Government asked pointed questions of Ridout. Ridout telegraphed the War Office. W.R. Hall for the Assistant Financial Secretary, War Office, observed, “I am directed to acquaint you that this case is not covered by the terms of Army Order 275/1918 in as much as he did not embark from Hong Kong and it is regretted that a refund cannot be sanctioned.” The Hong Kong Government directed its appeals far and wide falling invariably on stony ground: “The payment of Mr. Swinnerton's passage is not a matter for this government but that any claim in that connection should be made to the War Office.” {F.S. James, Colonial Secretary, Straits Settlements} “It is regretted that we have no authority by which the sum of \$228.71 advanced to the Rev. C.E. Swinnerton by the Hong Kong Government can be refunded by us.” {A. Yates, Deputy Assistant Quartermaster-General Straits Settlements} The Colonial Secretary's Office in Hong Kong became quite belligerent: “I am to request accordingly that your Government will be so good as to ask General Ridout personally to pay the money.” {A.G.M. Fletcher}.

The war concluded. Time passed. The Hong Kong Government sought its money. On the 29<sup>th</sup> January 1920 Ridout penned a missive from Fort Canning, Singapore trying very hard not to be withering, not altogether

successfully. He makes every effort not to say what he thinks of a government that authorizes him to provide passage from Singapore or Hong Kong for £38 but refuses to pay the same price on the technicality that this journey started at Jesselton, North Borneo, when the passage was being made in direct response to a request of that same government who were, “apparently”, seeking recruits. He ends, “If the War Office do not sanction the refund this would be most unfortunate and would call for further caustic remarks from the White Population in the Far East.”

After a delay of a further quarter B.B. Cubitt, Under Secretary of State at the Colonial Office, who had apparently not spent his war in Flanders, confirmed authorization for the payment of £38 to the Crown Agents on 10<sup>th</sup> May, thereby completing the last page of file WO 374/66709 now in the Public Record Office.

(We are indebted to Roy Talbot for this fascinating little story. The Reverend Charles Guy Dover Swinnerton was the son of the Revd. Charles Edward Swinnerton and the grandson of the Revd George Isaac Swinnerton of the Warwickshire branch. The Revd, Charles Guy Dover Swinnerton had three sons but none continued this long ministry).

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In answer to a petition preferred to the Committee by Dorothy Blackburne the relict of John Blackburne deceased late of Ridghill within the parish of Madely that Robert Morgan of Keele and John Morgan his sonne Randulph Burslem of the same and **William Swynerton** of Butterton [WS20] do deteyne the possession of certen grounds in Keele and Madely and the rents and profitts of them from her the said Dorothy Blackburne. It is ordered that the said Robert Morgan John Morgan Randulph Burslem and William Swynerton shall appeare before them the Committee at Stafford upon Friday next to shew cause why they deteyne the possession of the said rents and arerages of rents.

{Staffordshire County Committee 20<sup>th</sup> February 1643}

\* \* \* \* \*

Edward Swynnerton, gent. ... was buried at Eccleshall, December 10<sup>th</sup> 1598. The family seems to have fallen into decay after this time.

{The Rev. the Hon. G.T.O. Bridgeman, Collections for a History of Staffordshire Volume II}

### Further letters to Mark Swinnerton

Continued from Volume 11 No.3 April 1999 these are letters to Mark Swinnerton and his relations from his father Charles Swinnerton of the Isle of Man and other relations.

#### Explanatory Tree

Charles Swinnerton (1813-1907)

Stonemason.

Born Liverpool.

Move to live in Douglas, Isle of Man

m. Mary Callister of Mallew, IOM in 1854

and had issue:-

1. Mark Swinnerton (1840-1906) emigrated to America
2. Catherine Margaret (1837-1920) married Robert Blakely
3. Charles Swinnerton (Revd, 1843-1928) later changed name to Swynnerton
4. Robert Swinnerton (1845-1903) Jeweller & Clockmaker emigrated to USA
5. Joseph William Swinnerton (1848-1910) Sculptor – later Swynnerton
6. Godfrey Lloyd Swinnerton (1858-1891) Ship's Captain
7. Frederick Swinnerton (1858-1915) Artist later Swynnerton.

From Charles Swinnerton to his son Mark, and wife Sarah.

Douglas,  
Isle of Man

Corner note : I sent you all the books the other day.

21st March 1882

Dear Mark and Sarah,

I just drop you a line to say that, all being well, John Nicholson and myself will be starting probably on Monday next for Venice and from thence to Rome and come back by Genoa. John will combine work with pleasure as he will be sketching as we go along. It will be good practice for Fred as he meets us in Venice and both will go sketching together. I am happy to say that all here are well but I have rhumatics (*sic*) in my right shoulder and arm so bad that it is pain for me to write. I am writing this in the office room which is now denuded of everything save the sofa, 4 chairs and the table where I ? ? today if it takes up as at the present time it is snowing and blowing hard. I am

246

sorry to say that Governor Lock is leaving the Island in a few days being appointed a Commissioner of the Woods and Forests in London. The announcement took everyone aback. I attended a meeting last night for the purpose of presenting him with a testimonial in acknowledgment of the benefits he has conferred or has been the means of conferring on the Island since his sojourn here as Governor.

The High Bailiff occupied the Chair and as usual occupied one half of the time of the meeting talking rubbish and flattering the Governor and his wife to the great disgust of all who heard him.

Just got a letter from Godfrey dated Valparaiso 10th Jany. He is all right and well and had upon the whole a fine passage out. Just heard from Fred, and Joseph who is also well. Blakeley and family are also well. Mrs Murray Baker to whom I sold my yard has built a magnificent house at the lower end which will cost him I would say £1600-. I shall deliver up the keys of this room to him this week.

Things remain just as usual here, nothing strange having taken place since you left. How is little Mary and Sarah, your little things. I hope they are well as for the boy no doubt but he will get along all right. How does Willie ? I hope you will have a prosperous summer.

Sarah - why do you not write to me. Mind that you do. You, Mark, is often enquired after - Mrs. Plugue has just returned from England very ill in fact I fear that she is in the ? ? she looks very badly, poor thing. I am sorry for her.

With best love to you all and with kisses for the little ones, believe me,

Yours affectionate Father

Chas. Swinnerton

\* \* \*

From Charles Swinnerton to his son Mark, and Sarah

Douglas

Corner note : Write me soon.

Isle of Man

19th February 1882

Dear Mark and Sarah,

I have just got your letter with inclosed dra ? all right. I am sorry to hear that your fingers are frost bitten. It must be very sore I should think but I dont wonder at it when the cold ranges from 15° to 43° below zero. I am just thinking that Sarah would be wishing herself in the Isle of Man again.

We have had it very cold here. as low as 7° below freezing and I can tell you I felt it pretty cold. It lasted about a month, the ground covered with snow but now it is altogether changed for heavy wet as it is raining continually.

247

You must not have got my last letter as I got the ? birth of a son and heir and forthwith wrote congratulating Sarah for the way she had managed it. I am very glad to hear she is so well and that the little ones are all right. Surely they must have suffered with the cold as it would be difficult to keep them inside ? . It always creates an unpleasant feeling as I pass your house not seeing them or hearing them. They will very soon forget me. I daresay little Sarah has already.

Charles Frederick is a very nice name. I have not heard anything about Willy Skillicorn but he will be sure to go if you drop him a line. I remembered you both to the Clagues and the Hanneys. Mrs Clague continues ill. She has a bad cold at present.

Fred is at Catherines and is painting portraits of all the children. I dont think he will arrive in Rome before a month hence. Joseph is in Rome and was well a few days ago. Got a letter from Charles who complains of his chest being unwell. Maud is well but the little boy is suffering from a bad cold. He also tells me that the Revd. Lloyd Jones' brother has died without issue and therefore he comes in as heir at law for his brother's estate and he will most likely give up his rectory worth £600 per with house, Glebe land, etc. and he thinks from his letter that he has some intention of offering it to him and if he does so he scarsely (*sic*) thinks the state of his health would justify him in accepting it. But between you and I this may be all conjecture on his part. However he says that he will write me again on the matter.

Mrs. Blakeley received letters from Godfrey from Hongkong. He was quite well and the tone of the letters were very encouraging, quite different to any he ever wrote before. He seems to accept the sea as his profession but expressed a desire to go into steam next voyage. He speaks of the Captain as a poor, weak, inefficient man to command a ship and quite unfit to have a command of any man's property. He has been very good to him. He also says that he himself could take a ship to any part of the world.

You must understand that it is far from my wish to have put you to any great inconvenience to send me the interest although you know I have to pay the interest of the bonds on my property every six months. Yet so long as I could manage to get along I should be sorry to place you in a difficulty which might be avoided.

(last page missing)

\* \* \*

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From Charles Swinnerton to his son Mark

The Studio,  
Port St. Mary,  
Isle of Man.

8th Oct. 1888

Dear Mark,

Our correspondence has been few and far between I am sorry to say. Your letter of 12th Sept. I have just received and I also received the previous one dated 27th Sept. 1887. How you have got in your head that your letters to me are "perused by stranger eyes" I am at a loss to know but no doubt you inherit more or less that inherant feeling of suspicion common to the family. But I must disabuse your mind on that head by saying that none of your letters have been read by them or to them. Again you must have forgotten that your letter of /87 was in answer to one you had received from me written some months before but which had gone astray. That is the only reason that I did not write and not that I had forgotten you, Sarah or the tw<sup>9</sup> children who I am glad to hear are all well. I conclude from what you say that your Stores and Wharf are built and completed and that you are doing tolerably well and that the place is improving in business and population and I should think by this time you will be well established in business. Sarah it appears is able to follow the bent of her inclination in the way of farming and gardening and that to good account from what you say. Mary and Sarah will be a great help to her in the house and other ways. The two little boys and the wee girl will add no doubt to the pleasure of the family circle. As for Mary and Sarah they will have so changed since I saw them that I should not recognise them now.

Judging from what you say, Marysville (is that the name of the town) is considerably enlarged in roads made in the environs so that you can drive now direct to your house a distance of 8 miles. How is the town governed? Have you town commissioners and how is the law enforced?

You will perceive by the heading of this letter that I am at present living at Port St. Mary. No doubt you will be wondering why I am located there. Well I will tell you some year and a half ago I went to a sale auction of some building plots to buy one for Fred who wished to have a studio erected there. I bought a plot beautifully situated on the margin of the Bay whereon I have built him a studio. Mr. Blakeley lent him £200 and a gentleman friend of his lent him another £200 with which I have built him one of the prettiest little houses about this country. There is a kitchen, back kitchen, parlour, three

bedrooms and a large studio with open roof and a projecting window 5 feet towards the Bay principally of glass, and as Fred has gone to Bruges, Belgium, for about 8 months, I am living here.

The Blakeleys spent the summer here, and on their return left Gertrude behind as she had not been well before she came. So that is the reason why I am here. All letters direct to me at the above address.

I am very well thank God, although not so active as I were wont to be. I cannot give you the address of Godfrey as he is now in Australia on board his steam ship "Afghan" of which he is first officer. On his arrival I expect him to be promoted as Master of some other boat or the boat he is now on. Robert is still in business in Victoria Street and is doing fairly well. His wife and family are all well. Charles is in India but his little boy is with his Aunt in the Isle of Wight and his little girl is with a lady in England. He was quite well the last time I heard from him which is generally once a month. Godfrey we expect home about Xmas next. If you address your letters for him to my care I will give them to him on his arrival. Joseph and his wife are in London. In fact he has left Rome as a residence and has taken a studio in London. They come over here now and then. His address .....

.....(Here there is a large gap) read many of them. The town is still extending considerably as far as the cross four roads leading to Onchan. And now Mark I shall anxiously await the arrival of the long letter you promise which no doubt will explain matters which you have not touched upon in this letter. I am very glad to hear from you, and with my best love to yourself, Sarah and the dear children, believe me, Your affectionate,

Father,

Chas. Swinnerton

\* \* \* \* \*

**Geoffrey Swinnerton**

We very much regret to have to announce the resignation of Geoffrey John Swinnerton as our Treasurer/Secretary and meetings organiser due to a recurrence of his health problems. This is a great blow to the society: we wish him a speedy recovery and extend to him our sincere thanks for all his hard work and enthusiasm over the last few years.

**Letters**

ROSE COTTAGE  
GOLLY  
ROSSETT  
WREXHAM  
LL12 0AL

04/12/01

Col. I.S. Swinnerton  
'Cobwebs'  
Longburton  
SHERBORNE  
Dorset  
DT9 5PD

Dear Iain

**FURTHER BETLEY BRANCH MEMBER ACHIEVEMENTS**

As you know I have always relished a challenge and with this in mind I decided to apply for a place on an MSc Distance Learning Course in Facilities Management. This is a subject in which I have gained much experience due to the diversification of our company from initially Architecture & Surveying to a multi-disciplinary practice offering the full range of professional services to our clients.

Having no formal degree behind me and in fact never having been to University I was perhaps a little ambitious in applying for admission on to a Masters Course. Nevertheless, I was accepted in 1999 for this two-year intensive course, on the basis of my wide experience in the Construction Industry at Leeds Metropolitan University (LMU). I was to be a very mature student! The study involved working extensively from home on a number of modules and attending Weekend Workshops at Leeds three times a year. I did not realise quite what I was letting myself in for. Nevertheless, I more than held my own in the lectures and contributed I believe to the benefit of other students and myself. All the course information was delivered via the Internet and part of the facilities available was Electronic Journal access for almost any journal published throughout the U.K. This I found fascinating, so much so that I have retained my membership of this facility even though I have finished the course.

To cut a long story short realistically, I found that working full-time did not enable me to give the amount of time needed to gain the Masters Degree. After being referred in one module, I decided to settle for a Post Graduate Certificate, no mean achievement in itself.

On the 21/11/01 I went to up to the LMU Awards Ceremony at Leeds Town Hall to collect my award (in cap & gown!) I thoroughly enjoyed the experience of my first taste of academia, so much so that I would like to take an Open University Degree when I retire in 2005. I attach a copy of the Awards Ceremonies Brochure for you to retain in the Swinnerton Society files.

I thought that you to make mention of this my latest venture in the Family News section of the Journal.

Finally, for your further information I am currently learning the piano and am hopeful of 'treading the boards' again sometime next year.

Hope all is well with you and yours.

Yours sincerely

  
COLIN L. SWINNERTON

**From Mrs Carol Smith, 5 Sherfield Avenue, Havant, Hants PO9 5HS**

Dear Iain

I have only just started reading *Family Tree Magazine* and your enjoy your articles.

Re: Swinnerton

Simply for your information, my aunt Margaret Phoebe née Munnerley married a John (aka Jack) Swinnerton of Gwersyllt, nr Wrexham on 6<sup>th</sup> Nov 1937 at Connah's Quay, Flintshire.

If this is part of your particular branch of the Swinnerton tree and would like further information then please contact me.

Yours sincerely  
Carol

This was an easy one for a change! Apart from the fact that Nunnerley is quite an unusual name and had stuck in my memory, I had only recently dealt with this particular branch of the family (see this journal December 2000), tying it into the main Adbaston family. We have several members of the branch as members of the society including Alan Jones who is on the Council.

So – I was able to give Carol chapter and verse and explain about our family society (my regular articles in *Family tree Magazine* are, I hasten to add, not about the Swinnertons but deal with the history and records of all three services but mainly about the army).

She replied and sent me details of Jack and Margaret's family which added some useful data to the family file.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Family Notes:**

Congratulations to Colin Swinnerton (see letter on previous page). We noted the award of an Open University Degree to his wife Pat many years ago in this journal.

Also to Kirsty Jane Swinnerton who, as you will no doubt have gathered from the article earlier in this journal, has been awarded her Doctorate on a thesis based on her twelve year's work with endangered species. The award of the first Gerald Durrell scholarship some three years ago enabled to study for this. The Doctorate will be conferred on her in Canterbury Cathedral in July.

252

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